

MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	04 May 2013	Language	English
Circulation	136,530	Readership	330,000
Section	Local News	Color	Full Color
Page No	17,19	ArticleSize	429 cm ²
AdValue	RM 13,996	PR Value	RM 41,988



Pas cornered in Kedah

FEAR OF LOSING: It appears BN has slight edge although Pakatan is making a renewed push in last 24 hours of campaigning

AS contenders gallop into the final day of campaigning, both Barisan Nasional and Pas are locked in a tight race to win power in Kedah.

With traditional supporters locked, Pas and its allies are making a strong push in the last 24 hours of campaigning to win over swing voters in the hope of fending off a strong BN challenge.

Some quarters in Pas expect a close call, the outcome poised on a knife's edge. The fear of Pas losing control of the state after one term is real.

Analysts point to the lacklustre economic development and the Pas state government's policies that were unfriendly to non-Muslims.

This was further compounded by the in-fighting among state Pas leaders, which led to failed at-

tempts to oust Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Razak.

Pas leaders know that many voters doubt the party's ability to lead the state government. It could be a replay of the Terengganu episode when the voters there voted out the Pas government after one term.

A loss, or even a very narrow win, in Kedah would be a slap in the face of the top Pas leadership. The current reading suggests that Pas could garner 15-16 of the total 36 state assembly seats. It needs another four seats, two each from DAP and PKR, to form the state government by a simple majority.

In the 2008 election, BN won 14 seats, with the rest going to Pas (16), PKR (two), Independent (two) and DAP (one).

Kedah BN, on the contrary, is sounding more upbeat in the last 48 hours.

State BN chief Datuk Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah said he was not ruling out a possible 25 seats for the coalition.

If calculations are right, this will give BN two-thirds majority and return to rule the state comfortably.

"We think it is possible for us to win 25 seats based on the general sentiment of the people and the hard work put in by our candidates during this campaign period," Bashah, who is also the Kedah Umno chief, said.

However, others put the BN number at between 19 and 20 seats. Still, there is a good chance of BN wresting Pas seats such as Ayer Hitam, where Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir is contesting, Tanjung Dawai, Jeneri and Bandar Baru, among others.

Still, BN officials had expressed concern over how returning outstation voters might tilt the scale.

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Fence-sitters, outstation voters hold the key in Kedah

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A large number of those residing in the Klang Valley are expected to return today, although some outstation voters arrived home yesterday or earlier.

"These voters could in some way influence their family members and peers to vote against BN," one official said.

There are some 22,000 outstation voters, mostly from the Klang Valley and another 18,000 inter-district voters.

For certain, BN and Pas are fighting neck and neck to win over swing voters as the undercurrent is always unpredictable.

There is an equal chance of votes from fence-sitters going either way. A bombshell thrown at the

11th hour has done wonders in past elections.

For Kedah-based Prof Datuk Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, who is head of the politics, security and international affairs cluster of the National Council of Professors, the race between BN and Pas in Kedah is tight, with BN having a slight edge, leading Pakatan in terms of support by two per cent.

A GE13 opinion poll conducted by the Institute of Malaysian Political Analysis of Universiti Utara Malaysia and the National Professors Council, between Sunday and Tuesday, showed BN enjoying slightly over 52 per cent support in Kedah.

Voters in Kedah are overwhelmed with information offered by both sides either

through ceramah, the Internet or face-to-face meetings during house-to-house campaigning.

Big names in national politics, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Daim Zainuddin, had joined in to boost the BN campaign in the state.

Until the polling stations are opened tomorrow, all participating parties will be trying to avoid mistakes that could swing votes against them.

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